

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PLO LE

SUBJ: SALAH KHALAF INTERVIEW WITH MONDAY MORNING

1. PLO OFFICIAL SALAH KHALAF (ABU IYAD) GAVE A WIDE RANGING, EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO THE JANUARY 16-22 EDITION OF THE BEIRUT WEEKLY MONDAY MORNING. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS:

--"WE WERE AGAINST THE (SADAT) INITIATIVE FROM THE BEGINNING. . . HAVING BEEN AGAINST THE VISIT IN PRINCIPLE IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT WE WILL REJECT THE RESULTS."

--SADAT "CAN WITHDRAW HIS INITIATIVE AND RESIGN" OR HE "CAN ALSO END NEGOTIATIONS, ADMIT HIS MISTAKE AND NOT RESIGN."

--"THE OTHER CHOICE IS FOR HIM TO PUSH FOR A UNILATERAL STATEMENT WITH ISRAEL. . . THIS OF COURSE WILL NOT SATISFY THE PALESTINIANS."

--"THE PALESTINIANS WILL NEVER ACCEPT AN ALTERNATIVE HOME. EVEN IF THEY WERE TO OFFER US HALF OF LEBANON AS A GIFT WE WOULD REJECT IT. WE WOULD RATHER HAVE A SMALL SLICE OF OUR PALESTINE. THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS OUR HOMELAND AND WE LOVE IT. THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION OPEN TO US IS WAR. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR STRUGGLE UNTIL THE WORLD RECOGNIZES OUR RIGHTS."

--"THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT WAS A POLITICAL MEETING WHICH HAS PRODUCED NO PRACTICAL RESULTS SO FAR. . . ANY FRONT THAT IS FORMED MUST INCLUDE IRAQ. . . THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STEADFASTNESS FRONT IS NOT AIMED AT THE CREATION OF A NEW AXIS IN THE ARAB WORLD."

--"THE STEADFASTNESS FRONT WILL NOT BE AN ANTI-SADAT FRONT. IT WILL BE A FRONT WHICH STANDS UP TO THE ISRAELI CHALLENGE AND LEAVES ITS DOORS WIDE OPEN TO ANY ARAB WHO WISHES TO JOIN IT. THE FRONT, IN FACT, MAY PROVIDE A MEANS TO BRING EGYPT BACK TO THE ARAB LINE, REGARDLESS OF SADAT OR ANY OTHER PERSON. THE FRONT WILL NOT BE A REJECTIONIST ONE. IT WILL BE A STEADFAST FRONT. WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US IS NOT NEGATIVE ATTITUDES BUT POSITIVE ACTION. WE DO NOT WANT TO BE NEGATIVE. WE WILL NOT, FOR INSTANCE, DECLARE THAT WE INTEND TO DESTROY ISRAEL, BECAUSE THAT WOULD GAIN US INTERNATIONAL HOSTILITY AND PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH NEW PRETEXTS."

--"THAT IS WHY I SAY TO OUR BROTHERS IN THE LEBANESE FRONT, IF THEY REALLY ARE AGAINST INTEGRATION, THEY MUST EXTEND THEIR HANDS TO THE PALESTINIANS AND HELP THEM RETURN TO THEIR HOMELAND. THEY MUST OPPOSE THE COUNTRIES WHICH ARE PLOTTING TO IMPOSE INTEGRATION. WE ARE NOT THE PLOTTERS."

--"FRANKLY, I LIKE THE STATEMENT OF FORMER PRESIDENT SULEIMAN FRANJIE, WHO SAID THAT IT IS THE U.S. WHICH CREATED THE PROBLEM AND THE U.S. WHICH WILL CREATE FUTURE PROBLEMS. THAT IS SOUND TALK COMING FROM THE LEBANESE FRONT."

--"CARTER AND THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION HAVE DECIDED THAT WE ARE COMMUNIST AND THAT A PALESTINIAN STATE COULD TURN INTO A SOVIET STATE - WHICH IS A LIE. THEY KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT COMMUNISTS AND WE ARE NOT GOING TO BRING THE SOVIETS OR ANYONE ELSE INTO THE REGION. THOSE WHO HAVE JERUSALEM ARE NOT GOING TO INVITE THE SOVIETS."

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2. ALTHOUGH ABU IYAD DID NOT REPEAT HIS ACCUSATION THAT ABU NIDEL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF SA'ID HAMMANI IN LONDON, HIS COMMENTS CLEARLY INDICATE THAT HE BELIEVES THE DEED WAS DONE BY DISSIDENT PALESTINIANS.

3. COMMENT: THE INTERVIEW IS THE MOST MODERATE PLO PUBLIC STATEMENT SINCE THE SADAT INITIATIVE. IT EXPRESSES THE PLO'S FIRST PUBLIC RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT. BY SAYING IRAQ MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE STEADFASTNESS FRONT, IT REFLECTS THE PLO DESIRE TO AVOID HAVING TO CHOOSE SIDES BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ. BY SAYING THE FRONT WILL NOT BE ANTI-SADAT, KHALAF AGAIN INDICATES THE PLO DOES NOT WISH TO RULE OUT RECONCILIATION WITH THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT. KHALAF ALSO INDICATES THE PLO HAS NOT FORESWORN A DIPLOMATIC OPTION.

4. KHALAF'S INTERVIEW (RECORDED JANUARY 13) PRECEDED BY ONE DAY SADAT'S "I WILL RESIGN OR GO TO WAR" STATEMENT. IN CONSIDERING THE OPTIONS OPEN TO THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT, KHALAF DID NOT CONSIDER THE IDEA OF WAR, WHICH HE PROBABLY KNOWS TO BE UNREALISTIC FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE BELIEVES THAT SADAT MAY YET OPT FOR A SEPARATE BILATERAL EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE, WHICH SADAT OF COURSE CONTINUES TO RULE OUT. IN CONTINUING TO

FEAR THIS OUTCOME, KHALAF REFLECTS A BROAD SPECTRUM OF OPINION
IN BEIRUT. FEAR OF A SEPARATE PEACE WHICH WOULD LEAVE LEBANON
HOLDING THE PALESTINIAN BAG IS WIDESPREAD AMONG LEBANESE GOVERN-
MENT CIRCLES, RIGHTIST CHRISTIANS AND LEBANESE MOSLEMS.
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